



NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2011

11-03

TEEN DISTRACTED DRIVING: NOTHING TO “LOL” ABOUT

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Everyday activities for teenagers like text messaging, talking on a cell phone or even eating are dangerous, potentially deadly distractions when done behind the wheel of a vehicle. During California Teen Safe Driving Week, March 6 -12, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) is warning the state’s newest drivers that distraction can be life changing.

“Teenagers tend to think they’re invincible and can multitask while driving,” said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. “In reality, they’re inexperienced when it comes to driving and they need to recognize the responsibility and the risks associated with the privilege.”

However, it’s not just cell phones causing the distraction among teen drivers; passenger interference, adjusting the radio or changing the CD are additional factors leading to driver inattention.

“Officers see firsthand the destruction caused by inattention,” said Commissioner Farrow. “It only takes a second of distraction to result in a crash.”

During a four-year period (2005–2008) in California, drivers between the ages of 15 to 19 were involved in more than 20,000 collisions where inattention was a factor. Among those crashes, 41 percent resulted in injury or death. The overwhelming majority of these crashes is caused by inexperience or distractions, not "thrill seeking" or deliberate risk taking.

To address this growing problem and help drive home the message to teenagers about the dangers of distracted driving, the CHP acquired a grant to fund an educational campaign throughout the state. Efforts to reduce distracted driving through *Impact Teen Drivers – Connecting Key Players* continue through September 30, 2011, and are a part of California’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan, a statewide roadmap to reduce traffic-related fatalities.

“The bottom line, distracted drivers can destroy lives,” added Commissioner Farrow. “The only message they need to receive is to focus on the road and traffic around them.”

Funding for this program is provided by a grant awarded by the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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